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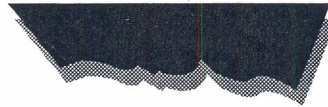
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“OUTSIDE ARE THE DOGS”

Interpreting Revelation's Hate Language



by David Lertis Matson

The book of Revelation is a difficult book to read but not simply for the reasons one might think. Quite apart from its highly apocalyptic character, which presents significant interpretive obstacles to modern readers unfamiliar with the genre, the book challenges modern men and women on another front—an ethical one. How do sensitive Christians, living in a post-Holocaust era, interpret a book that attacks Jews for being a “synagogue of Satan”? How do sensitive Christians, concerned about the adverse effects of violence in film and television on their children, interpret a book that depicts the punishment of the wicked in bloodthirsty horror and detail? How do sensitive Christians, aware of the dangers that bigotry and racism foist upon society, interpret the triumphalistic spirit that seems to pervade the book? As one who has taught Revelation on the college level and who is now engaged in a full-time preaching ministry, I have a vested interest in such questions. I

want to know: How do we interpret Revelation's hate language?¹

The questions raised above, of course, are concerns addressed to modern-day readers of the book. Up until recently, however, critical scholars have typically focused their attention on the readers of the past, seeking to limit the horizon of the book's meaning to the writer's own generation. This particular method of interpretation, termed historical-critical, has been increasingly called into question by former practitioners who cite, among other things, its false claim to objectivity.² With the rise of narrative criticism, a method of interpretation that treats the text simply as an entity in its own right, more and more scholars speak of the “implied reader,” that reader who resides in the text and is presupposed by the text.³ As we embark on a new millennium, yet another reader is coming increasingly into focus—the modern one. Here scholars consider the way gender, social location, and ideological commitments affect a

person's reading of a given text. If the way we interpret is deeply susceptible to social, cultural, and political influences, then a new set of questions arises that goes beyond traditional historical and theological categories. In the case of Revelation, we might ask, How does one read anti-Jewish statements in Revelation without becoming anti-Semitic? How does one read the violence passages in Revelation without becoming less sensitive to violence? How does one read the triumphalism of Revelation without becoming bigoted or intolerant? These kinds of questions about our reading of scripture recently led one noted New Testament scholar to call for a “hermeneutics of ethical accountability” that invites readers to consider “the effects and ethical implications of our interpretation.”⁴

Consider, for example, how Revelation has fared in the history of interpretation. In this issue of *Leaven*, Craig Farmer notes how easily the book of Revelation has served in Protestant polemics as “a convenient

battering ram for one's enemies," usually the Roman Catholic Church.⁵ In more recent times, Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* has sold millions of copies worldwide by depicting an angry God who doles out apocalyptic horrors on unrepentant people—a return, as M. Eugene Boring notes, to a pre-Christian understanding of Messiahship.⁶ By identifying the Soviet Union with the beast from the abyss, Lindsey's reading of Revelation had the effect of lending "biblical" support to the hard-line politics that characterized the Cold War era.⁷ Lindsey's futurist interpretation, in fact, is a prime example of a tendency common among interpreters both past and present, namely, the desire to read one's own enemies into the book.

Unfortunately, the use of the Bible to hurt one's enemies is nothing new, but it had tragic consequences recently for one homosexual couple murdered in a suspected hate crime. In a taped jailhouse conversation, one of the men accused in the crime told his mother that he planned on "representing myself with scripture." "God said, 'If you love me, keep my commandments,'" he said. "It's a jurisdictional problem. I have followed a higher law. I have to obey God's law, not man's." He further told his mother, "I didn't want to do this. I thought I was supposed to."⁸ This example, although extreme, ought at least to sensitize us to the danger of using the Bible to justify evil.

A Sensitive Reading of Revelation: Problems Encountered

My purpose in this essay is to propose an ethical reading of Revela-

tion that would help us come to terms with some of the problematic passages of the book. The three areas of concern that I address are those that trouble me the most as one who preaches and teaches from the book and respects its canonical status.⁹ In offering some interpretive principles by which to guide our reading of Revelation, I do not claim to solve all the problems; rather, I invite the reader to join with me in thinking through the ethical implications of our interpretation.

The Problem of Anti-Judaism.

Ever since the tragic consequences of the Holocaust, Christian interpreters have grown increasingly sensitive to the anti-Jewish rhetoric that so often marks the church's tradition. This sensitivity extends even to the New Testament itself; indeed, much has been written in recent years on the theme of the New Testament and anti-Semitism.¹⁰

Though Revelation is not usually cited in books that deal with the problem,¹¹ it does in fact contain two passages where anti-Jewish rhetoric emerges. To the church at Smyrna, the author of the book, John of Patmos (1:9), presents the risen Jesus as saying, "I know the slander on the part of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan" (2:9).¹² Likewise, to the church at Philadelphia: "I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but are lying—I will make them come and bow down before your feet" (3:9). While it is possible to take "Jews" here as really Judaizing Gentiles (Gentiles trying to live like Jews), it is more likely that the

reference is to actual Jews and reflects intense conflict between Jews and Christians in the localities of Smyrna and Philadelphia.¹³ What makes the charge especially severe is the fact that Satan in the book of Revelation is none other than the great red dragon who deceives the entire world (12:3, 9), making the Jews conspirators in deception.

One might wish to limit the effects of such harsh rhetoric to the first century. Yet this "synagogue of Satan" language will be echoed some three hundred years later by St. John Chrysostom (ca. A.D. 347–407), nicknamed the "Golden-Mouthed" for his powers of oratory:

The synagogue is worse than a brothel. It is the den of scoundrels and the repair of beasts, the temple of demons devoted to idolatrous cults, the cavern of devils, a criminal assembly of Jews, a place of meeting for the assassins of Christ, the refuge of devils.¹⁴

Sadly, one hears in these words the language of our own beloved Gospel of John, addressed to the Jews: "You are from your father the devil" (8:44).

However much we might wish that such anti-Jewish sentiments would disappear from our New Testaments and from subsequent Christian tradition, the fact is that anti-Jewish rhetoric, and a history of Christian anti-Semitism stemming from such rhetoric, does exist. As Christians, we naturally want to defend the New Testament from charges of anti-Semitism on historical or theological grounds, but the fact remains that the New Testament is largely responsible for the charge that Jews are devils and Christ

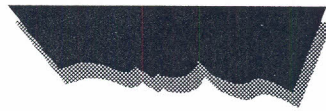
killers. As two Jewish writers, Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, observe: "It has been this New Testament assertion that ultimately legitimized the torture and murder of Jews in Christendom for nearly two thousand years."¹⁵ Given this tragic consequence, can we at least admit that the New Testament possesses, in the words of Janis Leibig, "anti-Semitic potential"?¹⁶ Simply repeating Revelation's language about Jews, however innocently, carries the danger of perpetuating negative stereotypes about Jews and hence contributes to an underlying current of anti-Semitism.

The Problem of Violence

Violence lies at the core of Revelation's apocalyptic language and imagery. In fact, violence is central to the book's central structure, which consists of a threefold series of seven woes—seven seals (6:1–8:1), seven trumpets (8:6–11:19), and seven bowls (16:1–18:24). Each series of violence unleashes unspeakable horrors upon the world. At the end of each, the reader senses that it is finally over, only to discover that another, more intense series of horrors is only beginning, like a bad horror movie that won't end!

The opening of the seven seals brings war, famine, pestilence, and death. All segments of human society, including kings and generals, the rich and the powerful, slave and free, hide themselves from the resounding fury of God's wrath (6:15–17). When the seven trumpets blow, the next series of woes is unleashed, and a third of the earth is consumed by hail and fire mixed with blood (8:7). A third of the sea

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turns to blood, a third of the rivers and springs become bitter (8:8–11), and a third of the light of the sun, moon, and stars is darkened (8:12). Demonic locustlike creatures with stings as severe as scorpions ascend out of a bottomless pit to punish and torture unrepentant humanity, compelling people to cry out for death, which only eludes them (9:1–11). Adding to the drama is the onslaught of a powerful army over two hundred million strong that streams across the Euphrates to kill a third of humankind (9:13–21). Yet more violence is to come! The pouring out of the seven bowls of wrath afflicts worshipers of the beast with loathsome and painful sores (16:2); turns the sea, rivers, and streams into blood (16:3–7); scorches unrepentant humanity with the intense, searing heat of the sun (16:8); and plunges them into utter darkness

(16:10–11). Between the trumpets and the bowls are other scenes that depict apocalyptic horrors: the tormenting of beast worshipers with fire and sulfur, the smoke of which ascends "forever and ever" (14:9–11); and the great winepress of the wrath of God, which produces a blood bath as deep as a horse's bridle for two hundred miles (14:17–20). All these horrors, the reader understands, transpire at the instigation of God and the Lamb, who sets the world's destiny in motion by opening the seven seals (chapters 4–5). This source of the violence in Revelation presents no small obstacle to theological interpreters of the book. As one noted preacher puts it:

The most serious problem we face in seeking to preach from Revelation may not be the bizarre imagery and symbolism, but rather the theology that undergirds them. Seven-headed monsters are one thing; a God who unleashes terrible calamity upon the world is quite another.¹⁷

The Problem of Triumphalism.

Also present in the book is the closely related attitude of triumphalism. So prevalent is it that Friedrich Nietzsche once called the book "the most rabid outburst of vindictiveness in all recorded history."¹⁸ The lines of demarcation between the good and the evil, the pure and the impure, emphatically appear on Revelation's pages: they are winning now but we will win out in the end. They are epitomized in the book by Babylon, an ancient and apt symbol of Rome, "the great city that rules over the kings of the earth" (17:18). In the climactic conclusion to the last series of woes (chapters 17–18), worshipers

celebrate the fall of Babylon and rejoice in her destruction. The laments and taunt-songs that make up this section of the book become the occasion for gloating over Babylon's demise: "Rejoice over her, O heaven, you saints and apostles and prophets! For God has given judgment for you against her" (18:20). Indeed, as the city burns to the ground (18:8), a vast multitude in heaven cries out, "Hallelujah! The smoke goes up from her forever and ever" (19:3). Here, it is important to note, the heavenly choir rejoices not only in God for his judgments but over Babylon for her destruction. The difference is not unimportant. As parents of two boys, each of whom played Little League, my wife and I have watched our share of baseball games. We have often watched parents root not only for their team but against the other team. It is one thing to cheer one's son or daughter for making a good play; it is quite another to cheer when a player on the other side makes a bad play. In Revelation, gleeful cheers go up for the defeat of the other team.

A Critical Reading of the Book: Interpretive Strategies

As a preacher on the west side of Los Angeles whose church sits directly across the street from the University of California and a short distance from the University of Judaism, I am quite sensitive to the problematic character of some of Revelation's language. Blindly repeating such language would only seem to perpetuate negative stereotypes about Jews and incite, or at least give tacit approval to, the use of violence against certain groups or

persons. We ignore or deny the problem at the expense of intellectual honesty and the effectiveness of the church. The only stumbling block we should not seek to remove is the message of the cross itself (1 Cor 1:18–31). For those of us willing to admit the potentially negative impact of Revelation's hate language, what steps can be taken to blunt some of its effects?

Orient ourselves as closely as possible to the book's own time and situation. Here the social location of the book's "real" or even "implied"

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reader(s) emerges as an important interpretive guide to help us reimagine our world in terms of theirs. This imaginative transference means, as Richard B. Hays points out, that "Revelation can be read rightly only by those who are actively struggling against injustice."¹⁹ Since John sees himself and his community as objects of persecution (1:9), either in the present or in the past, either real or anticipated, the challenge for us as contemporary readers is to identify with the struggle for justice in an unjust world. While this step does not justify the use of the violent images and symbols of the book, it does help us to understand them by giving us an insider's view of the struggle against injustice. The triumphalism of the book, for example, need not be seen as vindictive gloating but as a "celebration that the justice of God finally triumphs."²⁰

The neglect of this important principle leaves us vulnerable to the kinds of dangers described in this paper. For white affluent Americans to adopt the triumphalistic language of Revelation without sharing in the struggle of the oppressed is to make Christianity appear petty and vindictive. A recent example of this unfortunate consequence comes from the pen of a noted preacher with a wide listening audience. Commenting on a passage from Revelation, he writes:

I'd like to witness that day when Geraldo Rivera and Jerry Springer say, "Christians were right, there is absolute truth"; when Madonna, Kurt Cobain, and Howard Stern fall humbly on their knees before Jesus; when Ted Turner says, "Christianity is

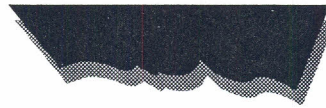
for losers, and I am a loser"; when Madalyn Murray O'Hair apologizes to the Lord for her opposition to school prayer; when Shirley MacLaine insists, "You only live once"; when Charles Darwin says, "Jesus Christ is Lord over all creation and all things were made by him"; when Frank Sinatra sings, "I should have done it your way"; when Karl Marx says, "Religion is the opiate of the people, but Jesus Christ is the Savior of those who believe"; when Donald Trump and Rosanne Arnold repeat, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth"; when Mick Jagger sings, "Lord, only you give satisfaction"; when Led Zeppelin admit they chose the wrong stairway to Heaven; when Beavis and his young colleague shut up—and choose to be still and know that he is God.²¹

Divorced from Revelation's suffering context, these words can come off sounding self-serving and vitriolic. We're right, they're wrong! We win, they don't! Many white, middle-class Christians who read Revelation to satisfy their curiosity about end-time matters might do well to listen to other readers of the book, those persons and groups who more easily identify with the social location of Revelation. As Hays observes, "Something very strange happens when this text is appropriated by readers in a comfortable, powerful, majority community: it becomes a gold mine for paranoid fantasies and for those who want to preach revenge and destruction."²² It is perhaps in this light that we can best understand the anti-Judaism of Revelation. The vilification of the Jews makes sense in the context of

first-century Asia Minor, where Christians were a powerless minority laying claim to Israel's heritage; something altogether different happens when this language is taken over by a powerful Christian majority in the United States of America.²³

Recognize the role that stock language plays in much of apocalyptic literature. Here we must recognize

The book of Revelation is not a "flat" book, with all its parts of equal value.



two things: Revelation's heavy dependence upon the Old Testament, particularly the exodus story, for much of its violent imagery; and the mythical nature of apocalyptic language. In Rev 15:1–16:21, which depicts the final, most intense series of apocalyptic horrors unleashed upon the world, the exodus theme provides the overall interpretive framework: "Egypt" is Rome; "Pharaoh" is the Roman emperor; the "plagues" are the apocalyptic woes.²⁴ The source of this language and imagery suggests that John's language stems not from bitterness or hate but from the desire to present his vision in a theologically compelling way, one that is steeped in the central event of the Old Testament.

At the same time, the nature of Revelation's language suggests that it is nonliteral and poetic, more a statement about John's confessing community than a statement about the way things objectively are. The picture of the eternal torment of the wicked, for example, compels Boring to comment:

To even ask whether Revelation "teaches" eternal torment for the damned is to misconstrue the book as a source of doctrines, to mistake its pictures for propositions. John's language does not deliver a doctrine about the fate of outsiders; it functions to warn insiders, who ponder the question "Is it such a terrible thing to participate in the Roman worship?"²⁵

Consider the chief controlling theme or image of the book and allow it to function as the theological adjudicator for the rest of the book. As with the rest of the Bible, the book of Revelation is not a "flat" book, with all its parts of equal value. John of Patmos simply does not set up the book that way. Rather, he subsumes his entire apocalyptic project under the interpretive powers of a chief controlling image: the Lamb that was slain. In a move of theological brilliance aptly termed "the most mind-wrenching 'rebirth of images' in literature," John equates the powerful "Lion of the tribe of Judah" (5:5), alone worthy of unleashing the seven seals of judgment, to "a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain" (5:6 RSV), thus inviting the reader to interpret all the events of chapters 6–19 in terms of the crucifixion of Jesus.²⁶ The theological center of the book is the slain Lamb, who "freed us from our

sins by his blood" (1:5), whose robe is dipped in blood prior to any eschatological battle (19:13)! John may retain traditional violent apocalyptic imagery, but he transforms the content with a reversal of worldly values: the Lamb conquers the nations by means of the only weapon at his disposal—"The Word of God," which he himself is (19:13; see 1:16; 2:12). The victory that the Lamb achieves in Revelation is the victory that comes about through suffering, not by the trampling down of one's enemies. As Hays observes, "Those who read the battle imagery of Revelation with a literalist bent fail to grasp the way in which the symbolic logic of the work as a whole dismantles the symbolism of violence."²⁷

Note the way that Revelation offers its own correctives throughout the book. A slain Lamb at the theological center of the book ultimately corrects any notion the reader may have that God sponsors the use of violence or bigotry to bring about godly ends. But other counterbalancing correctives appear as well. The kings of the earth, for example, who conspire with Babylon (18:9) and fight alongside the beast against the army of the rider on the horse (19:19), only to be killed by the sword of the rider on the horse and eaten by vultures (19:21), reemerge later to bring their glory into the heavenly Jerusalem (21:24). The nations, who earlier are struck down by the rider with a sword in his mouth and who experience "the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty" (19:15), reappear in the same vision walking by the light of the glory of God in the heavenly Jerusalem (21:23–24).

The natural habitat for understanding the book of Revelation, therefore, is corporate, not private.



Indeed, the leaves of the tree of life, fed and nourished by the river of the water of life, bring healing to the nations by virtue of their life-giving properties (22:2). The presence of such counterbalancing measures in the book of Revelation ought to alert us to the fact that its visions are by no means sequentially related; they offer separate and independent pictures of the end. Though it may not sit well with Westerners who desire consistency and precision at every point, John is able to hold in tension the idea that salvation will be limited to a select few (14:9–10; 20:11–15) and the idea that salvation will be universal in scope (5:13; 15:4; 21:5; 21:22–22:3). How does John resolve the conflict? He doesn't. How do we resolve the tension? We don't. We must affirm the tension in all its glorious ambiguity. The tension itself teaches us the ethical lesson of humility toward God and neighbor

since our perspective is limited, our knowledge finite.

Of course, some interpreters of Revelation may not find these interpretive guidelines helpful at every point. After all is said and done, they may feel that there is no other recourse but, in the words of Ronald J. Allen, to "preach against the text."²⁸ Warrant for this choice arises from the presence of other texts in the church's canon of scripture that might serve as correctives on a particular point. In this way, the diversity of the biblical canon itself invites the church to think theologically and to live with some degree of tension, with no easy recourse to safe but artificial harmonization.

A Community Reading of Revelation: "Blessed Are Those Who Hear"

But there is one final strategy in dealing with the problems of Revelation. This one takes its cue from the blessing pronounced upon the readers of the book: "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it; for the time is near" (1:3). Unlike most other works of apocalyptic literature, which were intended for private reading only, Revelation was intended to be read aloud, much like Paul's letters (1 Thess 5:27; Col 4:16).²⁹ Thus the blessing envisions not a private individual alone in his or her study with Bible in hand but a lector who reads the book in the presence of a worshiping congregation. John himself is in the Spirit on the Lord's day (1:10), the very day when Christians in Asia Minor would be

gathering together for worship (see Acts 20:7). The natural habitat for understanding the book of Revelation, therefore, is corporate, not private: "Blessed are those who hear."

This corporate context for hearing the content of Revelation is underscored by another fact of the ancient world: books were scarce and the cost of copying expensive; almost no one privately owned any portion of what we now call the Bible, and even churches had difficulty acquiring more than one Gospel.³⁰ For all practical purposes, the only access believers had to their sacred writings was through the hearing of the scriptures read aloud in church (1Tim 4:13), making the reader's role much more significant than it is today.

What is historically significant is hermeneutically significant as well: we understand Revelation best (and the whole Bible, for that matter) when we understand it together, that is, when we hear it in the context of a worshipping community. The interpretation of Revelation is not to be an individualistic affair in which each of us works out wild and fantastic interpretations of the end-time; it is, rather, to be a corporate enterprise undertaken by a people who are seeking to live out a faithful Christian witness in the face of hardship and cultural pressure to conform. In the final analysis, it is this community reading of the text that best ensures that its message will be sensitively and ethically appropriated. Ultimately, we as modern-day readers of Revelation know that bigotry against Jews is wrong and that violence and a spirit of triumphalism are incompatible with

the Spirit of Christ, because we belong to a community where the love of Jesus is not only taught but "caught."

Conclusion

A couple of years ago, I was lecturing on the text of 2 Thessalonians for a college survey class. When I came to one particular verse ("These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord"; 2 Thess 1:9), I remarked parenthetically that the notion of eternal destruction here seemed to be a state of eternal separation from God. Immediately, a hand went up in the back of the class: "But there is a fire, right?" Somewhat startled at the question, I asked, "What do you mean?" "You know," the voice replied. "In hell. There is a fire, right?" I responded that fire is indeed one of the images used in the Bible to describe that final state of separation from God but that other, sometimes contradictory, images—such as outer darkness—appear as well. Sensitively, I tried to suggest that we take such images seriously but not necessarily literally. Sad at not having received assurance, the voice spoke again, this time in a whispered, depressed tone: "You mean, there's no fire?" At that moment the horrifying thought occurred to me, Could this sincere Christian actually want to see people burn? Could she actually desire to see their eternal destruction? Her persistent questioning suggested that the lines of demarcation were clear: "Outside are the dogs" (Rev 22:15).

In the hands of a reader such as this, the book of Revelation is a

dangerous thing. It has potential for great good when it functions to keep hope alive for believers living in dire circumstances. But it also has potential for great harm when its language is subconsciously taken over and mixed with our own feelings of fear, hate, and prejudice. If we allow that to happen, what we may find at the end of the day—even with all our talk about exegesis and "what the text really means"—is that the hate language we hear in Revelation is actually our own.

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Notes

¹ By hate language, I mean language that persons outside the boundaries of my own particular group would find offensive or defamatory, and/or language that either incites or could be construed to lend support to hate crimes and/or attitudes.

² See, for example, Marianne Meye Thompson, "After Virtual Reality: Reading the Gospel of John at the Turn of the Century," in *What Is John? Literary and Social Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, vol. 2, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 232–35. I, for one, do not wish to jettison the historical-critical method altogether, since it provides valuable interpretive controls on our reading, especially with a book like Revelation. Practitioners of this method, however, should be wary of claiming too much.

³ For a helpful discussion of the implied reader and other related ways of reading, see Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 11–21.

⁴ R. Alan Culpepper, "The Gospel of John as a Document of Faith in a Pluralistic Culture," in *What Is John? Readers and Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Atlanta:

Scholars Press, 1996), 127.

⁵ As Farmer points out, this kind of Protestant arrogance and vitriol plagued not only the reformers but many of our own Stone-Campbell interpreters as well.

⁶ See M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation, Interpretation* (Louisville: John Knox, 1989), 109. Lindsey's futuristic interpretation carries the very real danger of fostering violence and hatred in the present. As Fred Craddock observes of readers of Revelation: "The conviction that our cause is God's cause and our enemies are God's enemies can unleash the ugliest in human nature"; Fred Craddock, "Preaching the Book of Revelation," *Interpretation* 40 (1986): 273.

⁷ Noted in Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 171.

⁸ Torrance (Calif.) *Daily Breeze*, 22 September 1999.

⁹ As Farmer notes, Revelation achieved canonical status only after a long process of discernment by the church.

¹⁰ See the seminal essay by Rosemary Ruether, "Theological Anti-Semitism in the New Testament," *Christian Century* 85 (1968): 191–96. Some of the more virulent passages are Matt 27:25; John 8:43–44, 47; and 1 Thess 2:14–16. For a survey of Christian anti-Semitism extending from New Testament times, see Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *Why the Jews? The Reason for Anti-Semitism* (New York:

Simon & Schuster, 1983), 90–109.

¹¹ Revelation fails to receive a chapter, for example, in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity: Separation and Polemic*, vol. 2, ed. Stephen G. Wilson (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986).

¹² Scripture quotations not otherwise noted are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

¹³ See Adela Yarbro Collins, "Vilification and Self-Definition in the Book of Revelation," *Harvard Theological Review* 79 (1986): 310–14.

¹⁴ Cited in Prager and Telushkin, 94.

¹⁵ Prager and Telushkin, 92.

¹⁶ Cited in R. Alan Culpepper, "The Gospel of John as a Threat to Jewish-Christian Relations," in *Overcoming Fear Between Jews and Christians*, ed. James Charlesworth with Frank X. Blisard and Jerry L. Gorham (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 39, 42. To feel the impact of Revelation's rhetoric sufficiently, one need only substitute "church" and "Christians" where Revelation reads "synagogue" and "Jews" (2:9; 3:9).

¹⁷ Joseph R. Jeter Jr., in *Preaching through the Apocalypse: Sermons from Revelation*, ed. Cornish R. Rogers and Joseph R. Jeter Jr. (St. Louis: Chalice, 1992), 27. Here the reader should note the prevalence of the theological passive in Revelation ("was given," "were given"), which identifies God as the source of catastrophe and upheaval (see, e.g., 6:2, 4, 8; 8:2; 9:1, 3–5).

¹⁸ Cited in Hays, 169.

¹⁹ Hays, 183.

²⁰ Boring, 186.

²¹ Bob Russell, "Why Study Bible Prophecy?" *Lookout*, 26 July 1998, p. 14.

²² Hays, 183.

²³ See Collins, 319–20.

²⁴ Noted by Boring, 173. For the next two points especially, I acknowledge my indebtedness to Professor Boring.

²⁵ Boring, 170.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 108, 118. Boring likens John's Lion=Lamb equation to a radical change of values: "As in mathematics when one changes the valence of the sign outside the parentheses, the formulae within the parentheses are retained, but all their values are reversed" (118). The word slain used to describe the Lamb is always in the perfect tense in Revelation, emphasizing the ongoing effects of the sacrifice.

²⁷ Hays, 175. Writes Craddock: "The Lamb beside the throne assures the reader that the final uses of power are not for vengeance and destruction" (Craddock, 276).

²⁸ Cited in Jeter, 29.

²⁹ See David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5* (Dallas: Word, 1997), 21.

³⁰ J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 51.